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FROM: MOSCOW

TO: Secretary of State

NO: 1774, MARCH 9, 7 P.M.

PRIORITY

SENT DEPARTMENT 1774, REPEATED INFORMATION LONDON 347, PARIS 321, BONN 275, BERLIN 137.

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I QUESTION SECOND PARAGRAPH OF DEPARTMENT'S DRAFT REPLY SOVIET NOTE (DEPTEL 1406). THIS IMPLIES WE FEAR SEPARATE PEACE TREATY BEFORE NEGOTIATIONS HELD WHICH SEEMS MOST UNLIKELY. MOREOVER LAST SENTENCE THIS PARAGRAPH APPEARS TO ME EXCEEDINGLY WEAK. IN FOURTH PARAGRAPH WORD "THEIR" COULD BE TAKEN TO MEAN ONLY POLAND AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA. MIGHT BE BETTER CHANGE SENTENCE TO READ "THE POSSIBILITY OF PARTICIPATION OTHER COUNTRIES."

I AM STILL INCLINED BELIEVE WE SHOULD PROPOSE SUMMIT MEETING WITHOUT AGENDA AND WITHOUT PRIOR FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING. WITHOUT ATTEMPTING FULL DISCUSSION PROBLEM WISH POINT OUT THAT AS MATTERS STAND SOVIETS WILL SURELY REFUSE DISCUSS REUNIFICATION AT FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING AND WE WILL THEREFORE BE IN POSITION PUTTING FORWARD OUR PROPOSALS WITH NO CORRESPONDING CHANGE IN CURRENT SOVIET POSITION. FOREIGN MINISTERS WILL BE IN POSITION HAVING TO FIX AGENDA FOR SUMMIT MEETING WHICH BRITISH AND PROBABLY WORLD OPINION WILL DEMAND BEFORE FINAL SHOWDOWN ON BERLIN PROBLEM. WE MIGHT THEREFORE HAVE TO AGREE EITHER TO SUMMIT CONFERENCE WITH AGENDA EXCLUDING REUNIFICATION OR WITH NO AGENDA. POSSIBILITY GETTING KHRUSHCHEV TO ENGAGE IN SERIOUS NEGOTIATIONS ON REUNIFICATION WOULD PROBABLY BE LESSENED BY FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING. ASSUME WE WOULD NOT WISH EXPOSE OUR WHOLE HAND AT FOREIGN MINISTERS MEET

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-2- 1774, MARCH 9, 7 P.M., FROM MOSCOW

THEREFORE OUR PROPOSALS UNLIKELY BE ATTRACTIVE FROM PROPAGANDA VIEWPOINT AND NOT VERY CONVINCING ALTERNATIVE TO SOVIET PROPOSALS ON BERLIN. ABOUT ONLY PROBLEM ON WHICH I CAN SEE USEFUL NEGOTIATIONS AT FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES IS EUROPEAN SECURITY WHICH IF HELD IN FACE OF SOVIET REFUSAL DISCUSS REUNIFICATION WOULD APPEAR DANGEROUS PARTICULARLY IN VIEW CURRENT BRITISH THINKING.

RECOGNIZE OUR PREVIOUS PUBLIC POSITION PRESENTS DIFFICULTY BUT SUGGEST THIS COULD BE OVERCOME BY RELATING IT TO DANGEROUS SOVIET INITIATIVE RE BERLIN AND THREAT SEPARATE PEACE TREATY. BURDEN OF PROOF AT SUMMIT MEETING WOULD BE ON KHRUSHCHEV WHEREAS IF WE INSIST UPON FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING WE WILL BE EXPECTED PRODUCE PROPOSALS OFFERING PROSPECT AGREEMENT WHICH NOW SEEMS REMOTE. ALTHOUGH KHRUSHCHEV WOULD PROBABLY TAKE OUR AGREEMENT TO SUMMIT MEETING AS SIGN OF WEAKNESS WE WOULD BE IN STRONG POSITION BEFORE WORLD OPINION AND BETTER ABLE TAKE STRONG STAND.

DECISION ON LEVEL OF MEETING COULD BEST BE MADE WHEN PROPOSALS WE INTEND PUT FORWARD ARE KNOWN AND WE HAVE AGREEMENT WITH OUR ALLIES UPON OUR OBJECTIVES. IF, FOR EXAMPLE, PRINCIPAL OBJECT OF MEETING IS TO WARN KHRUSHCHEV RE THREATENED ACTIONS ON BERLIN AND SEPARATE PEACE TREATY SUMMIT MEETING MIGHT BE BETTER. IF OBJECTIVE IS TO GAIN TIME FOREIGN MINISTERS WOULD BE USEFUL. SUGGEST WE CONSIDER DELAYING REPLY TO SOVIET NOTE UNTIL WESTERN POSITIONS FURTHER DEVELOPED.

THOMPSON

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